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Sy CAP NARA Date 4/22/98

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
ASSISTANT SECRETARY

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To : The Secretary

Through: S/S

From : AF - Joseph Palmer 2nd

Subject: Proposed Visit by Emperor of Ethiopia to Martin Luther King's Grave - ACTION MEMORANDUM

Emperor's Tentative Schedule: The Emperor of Ethiopia at the invitation of the President will arrive in Washington the afternoon of July 7, 1969 to begin a State visit. He will have talks with the President and other senior officials July 8 and 9.

He will attend a prayer breakfast with members of Congress before formally leaving Washington about 9:30 a.m., July 10, for the U.S. Agricultural Research Station at Beltsville, Maryland. After touring the Station, he will return to Andrews Air Force Base to board the President's plane for Atlanta and Cape Kennedy. He will have lunch on the plane. Arriving at Dobbins Air Force Base, Atlanta, about 1:30 p.m., July 10, the Emperor is scheduled to lay a wreath on Mr. King's grave and then attend a brief ceremony at Sister's Chapel to accept an honorary degree from Morehouse College. He would depart Atlanta about 4:00 p.m. for Cape Kennedy.

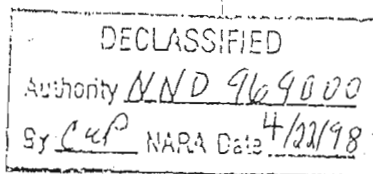
He will visit the facilities at the Cape the morning of July 11 and then depart for New York City. His visit in New York is private. He is expected to leave the country the evening of July 12.

Why Visit King's Grave: The Emperor has devoted much of his life to working in the cause of the peaceful settlement of disputes. Founding father of the United Nations and Organization of African Unity, he has repeatedly been called on to mediate conflicts whether between Algeria and Morocco or in Nigeria. His proudest sobriquet is peacemaker.

In the initial discussion with Ethiopian Ambassador Minassie concerning the Emperor's schedule, Minassie was enthusiastic about the Emperor's visit to King's grave. He had to be dissuaded from announcing it to the press immediately. When the idea was posed to the Ethiopians in Addis Ababa, Prime Minister Aklilu said the "Emperor liked the idea" and "Reverend King's general objectives of

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April 21, 2005

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2

non-violence and peace are admired in Ethiopia" (Addis Ababa 2678, para 10). Aklilu only wished to be certain that the Emperor's visit to King's grave would not be taken as interference in the U.S. domestic political scene.

Our relation with Emperor Haile Selassie is close and of long standing. Many young, educated Ethiopians--the leaders of Ethiopia when the Emperor dies--have come to believe that we are not aware of their hopes and aspirations. Nobel Prize winner Martin King is one of their heroes. A visit by the Emperor to King's grave during his State visit here would help importantly to improve the image of the U.S. in eyes of the young elite in Ethiopia. It would also be well received by moderates in our own society who are devoted to King's principle of non-violence.

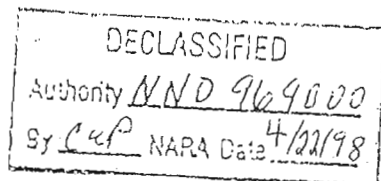
Status of Atlanta Stop by Emperor: The proposal for the Emperor to stop in Atlanta to lay a wreath on King's grave and other possible activities in the Atlanta area was discussed at a White House meeting June 5 with members of the President's National Security Council staff. The proposed schedule of the Emperor, with appropriate clearances, was then transmitted to the Addis Ababa Embassy (State 092841). The Ethiopians' favorable reply to the Atlanta stop was noted above (AA 2678). White House approval was also obtained before a telephone call was made to Morehouse College President Gloster to alert him of the possibility of the Emperor's visit and to ask his cooperation. President Gloster was most excited at the prospect and offered to poll his Board in order to be prepared to present to the Emperor an honorary degree. Citizens of Atlanta are justly proud of the racial harmony in their city. The Emperor's stop at Atlanta was consistently described as most tentative, but undoubtedly a good many in Atlanta are now aware it is under consideration and may be keenly disappointed if the Emperor fails to appear.

If the visit by the Emperor to Atlanta is now cancelled, we can offer an explanation if asked which will appear reasonable, although it may give rise to some doubts in the black community. The Emperor is nearing 77 years of age. He will have had a busy schedule in Washington. It will likely be hot. On his day of departure from Washington, July 10, he is already scheduled for an early morning breakfast with Congressmen, a formal departure ceremony, and a visit to an agricultural station. Permitting the Emperor part of an afternoon and an evening to rest is certainly justifiable, although the Emperor does not usually permit the prospect of fatigue to interfere with activities he considers important.

Nevertheless, I strongly urge that the Emperor's proposed

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3

stop at Atlanta be retained in the schedule. He will be in Atlanta less than three hours. His visit to King's grave will be appreciated by his own young elite in Ethiopia and improve the U.S. image with this important group of future Ethiopian leaders. It will also be a notable event to moderates, here and in Africa, who have embraced the principles of non-violence. Any indication that the U.S. Government had discouraged the visit could be misinterpreted and possibly embarrassing.

Recommendation: That you approve the Emperor's stop in Atlanta to lay a wreath at Mr. King's grave and to accept an honorary degree from Morehouse College.

Approve: _____

Disapprove: _____

Date: _____

Concurrence:

AF - Amb. Moore

Drafted by:

GR
AF/NE:GRBeyer:br
June 28, 1969

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